FATHER LACOMBE

Some people think that the West has no heroes of its own.... I mean heroes who have become so famous that many, many stories have grown up about their names.

I assure you that the West does have heroes, and that the things they did in bringing civilization to the great Westland were among the most heroic deeds in all Canada's history.

Twelve-Foot Davis, for instance was a hero of good-will and generosity. Father Lacombe was also a hero of good will but especially he was a hero of faith. His faith was so strong that he was able to perform deeds of charity and kindness which seem to some of us like miracles.

For instance in 1871 there was a terrible epidemic of small pox which swept over the Western Plains. A folktale says that the small pox began through an act of revenge performed by two white traders whose partner had been killed by the Blackfoot Indians. The tale says that the two white men sold smallpox infected blankets to the Indians, hoping to destroy them all.

The poor Indians suffered terrible agony during the epidemic, and through the whole thing Father Lacombe was a minister of mercy. He seemed to bear winged feet. He would be heard of at Fort Edmonton, then at Fort Pitt then at Fort Carlton. How he was able to go so fast from point to point nobody ever could understand. Wherever he

went, though, he carried the hope of life to the stricken Indians.

Father Lacombe was born in 1827 near Montreal. He was ordained as a priest ~~in~~ at 22 years of age and left immediately for work in the West. He eventually came to Fort Edmonton where he lived in quarters of the Hudson's Bay Company, and ministered to the Indians living round about. The first winter he was at Fort Edmonton he studied the language of the Cree Indians, becoming so good a scholar that he was able to write a Cree dictionary. He learned also how to handle a dog team, how to make his bed and keep warm in a blizzard, how to run the river rapids in a light canoe and how to live on berries and fish in the summertime and on game in the winter.

In those early years he had a hard time, for the Indians did not take easily to ~~xxxxx~~ the Christian faith that Father Lacombe preached so eagerly. It was only after he had proved to the Indians that he never lied to them, that he could suffer hardship as courageously as they, and that he was willing to go out in any kind of weather to tend their sick and baptize their dying, that they accepted him as their friend and spiritual leader.

Father Lacombe was a builder, ~~though~~, as well as a missionary. The tiny Mission at St. Albert was established in 1861, and Father Lacombe realized that the Sturgeon River flowing nearby was always dangerous in high water. He decided to build a bridge, and with the help of the Indians and other people living nearby he built the first

bridge west of the Great Lakes. The Indians had never before seen a bridge. They spent days crossing and recrossing it. They even pitched tents there, and one brave was caught lighting a fire right in the middle. After that Father Lacombe insisted that the Indians camp at least 50 feet from the ends of the bridge.

In 1862 he established the first school west of Winnipeg at Fort Edmonton. The school had twenty pupils--mostly children of the Hudson's Bay families living at the Fort. He begged seeds in the East and taught the Indians how to farm. His dream was to make his parish self-supporting, to grow grain, vegetables and flowers.

Father Lacombe, like Twelve-Foot Davis gave away most of what he had. He never had more than one of anything, for no sooner did he stock up than he gave away the extras. He could not bear to see anyone, white or Indian, with less than he had.

He had a delightful sense of humor, too. After completing one hard, cold trip when the whole party ran out of food, Father Lacombe said, " If we had had a pinch or two of salt, the moccasins wouldn't have made a bad meal at all!"

When the Canadian Pacific built the railroad through the West they found that at Gleichen, in Southern Alberta, the Blackfoot Indians refused to let the railroad cross their reserve. Father Lacombe was called by the railroad men, and the priest went out to see his friend, Chief Crowfoot.

He told Crowfoot that it was best for his people that the railroad should go through. Crowfoot knew that Father Lacombe had never lied to the Indians, and the Chief persuaded his people that everything was all right. The railroad went through.

When the railroad reached Calgary in 1883 George Stephen, first president of the Canadian Pacific railway came out to Calgary to see how things were going. Among those who visited George Stephen was Father Lacombe. When he saw the priest George Stephen told him how grateful the railroad was for getting permission to build the road through the Indian reserve. "In fact," said Mr. Stephen, " I am going to resign as President of the railroad for one hour. I move that for one hour Father Lacombe become President of the Canadian Pacific Railroad."

The West was settling up rapidly when Father Lacombe received his last vision of service to mankind. He decided that he would build a home for the aged. He did not know where the money was going to come from, but he knew that he would get it.

He did. First of all the famous Pat Burns, the cattleman, gave Father Lacombe 200 acres of land. A choice building site. Then the money began to come in and it wasn't long before the Home became a reality. Men came to live their sunset years beneath its sheltering roof.

When he was faced with the problem of money for the Home's upkeep the people of the West responded--Protestant and Catholic alike. They all wanted the last dream of the West's grand old man to come true.

FATHER LACOMBE

By R. Gard.

Some people think that the West has no heroes of its own. I mean heroes who have become so famous that many, many stories have grown up about their names.

I assure you that the West does have heroes, and that the things they did in bringing civilization to the great Westland were among the most heroic deeds in all Canada's history.

Twelve Foot Davis, for instance, was a hero of good will and generosity. Father Lacombe was also a hero of good will, but especially he was a hero of faith. His faith was so strong that he was able to perform deeds of charity and kindness which seem to some of us like miracles.

For instance in 1871 there was a terrible epidemic of smallpox which swept over the Western Plains. A folktale says that the smallpox began through an act of revenge performed by two white traders whose partner had been killed by the Blackfoot Indians. The tale says that the two white men sold smallpox infected blankets to the Indians, hoping to destroy them all.

The poor Indians suffered terrible agony during the epidemic, and through the whole thing Father Lacombe was a minister of mercy. He seemed to bear winged feet. He would be heard of at Fort Edmonton, then at Fort Pitt, then at Fort

Carlton. How he was able to go so fast from point to point nobody ever could understand. Wherever he went, though, he carried the hope of life to the stricken Indians

Father Lacombe was born in 1827 near Montreal. He was ordained as a priest at 22 years of age and left immediately for work in the West. He eventually came to Fort Edmonton where he lived in quarters of the Hudson's Bay Company, and ministered to the Indians living round about. The first winter he was at Fort Edmonton he studied the language of the Cree Indians, becoming so good a scholar that he was able to write a Cree dictionary. He learned also how to handle a dog team, how to make his bed and keep warm in a blizzard, how to run the river rapids in a light canoe, and how to live on berries and fish in the summertime and on game in the winter.

In those early years he had a hard time, for the Indians did not take easily to the Christian faith that Father Lacombe preached so eagerly. It was only after he had proved to the Indians that he never lied to them, that he could suffer hardship as courageously as they, and that he was willing to go out in any kind of weather to tend their sick and to baptize their dying, that they accepted him as their friend and spiritual leader.

Father Lacombe was a builder, too, as well as a missionary. The tiny mission at St. Albert was established in 1861, and Father Lacombe realized that the Sturgeon River

flowing nearby was always dangerous in high water. He decided to build a bridge, and with the help of the Indians and other people living nearby, he built the first bridge west of the Great Lakes. The Indians had never before seen a bridge. They spent days crossing and recrossing it. They even pitched tents there, and one brave was caught lighting a fire right in the middle. After that Father Lacombe insisted that the Indians camp at least fifty feet from the ends of the bridge.

In 1862 he established the first school west of Winnipeg at Fort Edmonton. The school had twenty pupils -- mostly children of the Hudson's Bay families living at the Fort. He begged seeds in the East and taught the Indians how to farm. His dream was to make his parish self-supporting, to grow grain, vegetables, and flowers.

Father Lacombe, like Twelve Foot Davis, gave away most of what he had. He never had more than one of anything, for no sooner did he stock up than he gave away the extras. He could not bear to see anyone, white or Indian, with less than he had.

He had a delightful sense of humor, too. After completing one hard, cold trip when the whole party ran out of food, Father Lacombe said, "If we had had a pinch or two of salt, the moccasins wouldn't have made a bad meal at all!"

When the Canadian Pacific built the railroad through the West they found that at Gleichen, in Southern Alberta, the Blackfoot Indians refused to let the railroad cross their reserve. Father Lacombe was called by the railroad men, and the priest went out to see his friend, Chief Crowfoot.

He told Crowfoot that it was best for his people that the railroad should go through. Crowfoot knew that Father Lacombe had never lied to the Indians, and the Chief persuaded his people that everything was all right. The railroad went through.

When the railroad reached Calgary in 1883, George Stephen, first president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, came out to Calgary to see how things were going. Among those who visited George Stephen was Father Lacombe. When he saw the priest, George Stephen told him how grateful the railroad was for getting permission to build the road through the Indian reserve. "In fact," said Mr. Stephen, "I am going to resign as president of the railroad for one hour. I move that for one hour Father Lacombe become President of the Canadian Pacific Railroad."

The West was settling up rapidly when Father Lacombe received his last vision of service to mankind. He decided that he would build a home for the aged. He did not know where the money was going to come from, but he knew that he would get it.

He did. First of all the famous Pat Burns, the cattleman, gave Father Lacombe 200 acres of land, a choice building site. Then the money began to come in and it wasn't long before the Home became a reality. Old folks came to live their sunset years beneath its sheltering roof.

When he was faced with the problem of money for the Home's upkeep, the people of the West responded, Protestant and Catholic alike. They all wanted the last dream of the West's grand old man to come true.